

Monday 1 March, 2010

Golden Shears Fever Sets In

RUGBY World Cup eat yer heart out – the 50th Golden Shears are happening right here in Masterton this week and shearing fever has well and truly set in.

Hundreds of entrants, both men and women, are part of this year's pilgrimage to Masterton to compete in the annual shearing and woolhandling championships, an event that is recognised internationally as the most prestigious of its kind. To add to the excitement, organisers are taking the show one step further with a range of events to celebrate the Shears' 50th Anniversary.

Golden Shears president Mavis Mullins, herself a winning woolhandler in the late '80s and early '90s, said Masterton will be alive with activity over the coming week, with shearing and sheep set to be the talk of the town.

"What's really exciting this year is that the whole community has got in behind all the events - we're really all in it together. And for the whole week, every day there's something".

Mavis said with so much happening she would be hard pressed to pick a favourite event for the week. From a Miss Golden Shears reunion yesterday to celebrity shearing in Masterton town centre right through to a photo exhibition documenting five decades of Golden Shears, on show at Aratoi, Museum of Art and History.

"There are some fabulous old photos. They really capture that pioneering New Zealand spirit and you kind of get a tingly feeling."

And this is without even touching on the competitions this week, which kick off Wednesday afternoon with the novice and junior woolhandling and shearing heats. Competitions then run solidly each subsequent morning, afternoon and evening, culminating in the coveted Golden Shears Open Shearing Final on Saturday evening, for which tickets are close to selling out.

However while speculation for the winner of Saturday's final is hot, fierce rivalry is on the cards for this year's enormously popular veteran events on Thursday.

According to Mavis there are around 30 shearers entered in the 55-plus event and more than 40 in the 65-plus, and rumour has it the competition is going to be fierce.

"These guys are real men. They started shearing before we knew pasta was good for you and they didn't go to the gym to train. They ate chops and spuds and didn't complain. There are going to be some tough fellows up there for these events."

One of those men is Carterton's Kevin Aplin, who's entered in the veterans 65-plus event. Kevin hasn't competed since the 40th Golden Shears ten years ago but prior to that had participated at least thirty times.

Kevin said he hasn't done any training and isn't feeling ready for the competition – he's works manager for the Golden Shears and so has been too busy supervising the stand being erected to think about training – but it all comes down to “how your mind feels at the end of the handpiece at the time”.

“It will be competitive, there's no doubt about it. I've known some of (my competitors) for too long and I know there'll be a struggle.”

Tickets for all events at the Golden Shears are selling well with only a few left for Saturday night's final. Those who can't make it to Masterton will be able to watch the action live via the Golden Shears website at www.goldenshears.co.nz.

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